

**GRESHAM OUTLOOK**  
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**MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.**

Why do we celebrate Christmas, what does it mean, and why do we celebrate it as we do?

Christmas is a religious festival that has come down to us through the centuries. We observe it too often as a matter of course without knowing its meaning or seeking to carry out its real purpose.

Historically Christmas began to be celebrated in the first or second century of the Christian era. The first reference to it is found in writings at the beginning of the third century. In writings of the fourth century it is referred to as of considerable antiquity. As there was no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's nativity, which it celebrates, at first various dates were observed but all near the time now agreed upon and now universally observed by the Christian church in all countries.

Many writers believe that the observance of certain heathen festivals on or about the 25th of December had an influence in fixing the time of Christmas. There was a Roman festival, held at the time of the winter solstice, when the sun, as it were, is born anew. It has often been referred to as having had a strong bearing on the time of observing the nativity of the Christ. Various ideas and customs in connection with our observance of Christmas have been borrowed from heathen festivals of various countries. For instance, Santa Claus, from the German; yuletide from the Scandinavian and Saint Nicholas from a priest by that name, the friend of children who gave them gifts at Christmas.

Christmas is the mass, or festival, of Christ. In the larger sense its general observance in Christendom is the recognition which all show of the fact of God's love for men in the gift of his only begotten son Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men.

Peace on earth, good will to men.  
For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish but have everlasting life.

The expressions of love and good will, the gifts as tokens of affectionate remembrance and the unselfish gifts to relieve distress and make others happy are, then, the true observance of Christmas and sincere honor of Christ who came in human form and who remains in human hearts that are actuated by his love.

**CHRISTMAS BRINGS OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE.**

Christmas is the joy-fest of the whole year. For us it comes in the midst of the winter season, when the nights are longest, when all nature seems to sleep, when dullness broods over the landscape. The flowers are gone, the birds are bare and dark, or white with frost, the wind whistles dolefully through the leafless branches. The human heart feels the chill as the cold brings suffering to the body and the dullness weighs upon the human mind.

Right into the midst of this wintry deadness and chill comes a flood of cheering light and a call to joyous activity—it is the Christmas call to service. Nature may be dead in its wintry sleep yet the human heart awakens to the sound of the joy bells and warms to the call of love.

We are called to a feast of good things. We are shown a summer-land of opportunity. We are introduced to a new world where flowers of thoughtfulness bloom, where the sunshine of love awakens all hearts to a larger and happier life. We hear music sweeter than that of birds, the air is laden with the incense of joy, springtime has burst upon the soul. The sun of Righteousness has risen with healing in his wings.

It takes a spiritual perception to truly appreciate Christmas.

It requires a spirit of service to make Christmas what it ought to be—the happiest time of all the year.

It means giving the best we have in love to others, as we have opportunity, to make Christmas last throughout the year.

It is the genius of man to make the most of losses. Astoria is peopled by heroic citizens and a new and greater "City by the Sea" will rise, Phoenix like, from the ashes of the old Astoria. The quick response of rival cities to aid shows that we are all one in the larger purpose of upbuilding our state.

When a Gresham business man, who happened to be in Portland, calls up a local dealer long distance to know if he has certain appliances on hand, before purchasing same in Portland, it suggests a spirit of loyalty and cooperation which it would be well for all to emulate. This really happened the other day.

**TO ASSIST THE RIGHT AND RESIST THE WRONG.**

This is a queer world in which we live with its apparently conflicting influences and forces. There seems to be always something base working to offset the good and a saving force to overcome the things which tend to debase. We are sometimes led to question the outcome but reflection will lead us to the right solution of this enigma of life.

There are those who do not see the signs of ultimate victory and are lost in a maze of pessimistic doubts and fears.

Darkness, ignorance, error, sin, fear, are negative states. None of these can prevail when its opposite, a positive, appears. Light dispels darkness; knowledge overcomes ignorance; truth conquers error; virtue drives sin to cover; love banishes fear. The positives are the active, eternally persisting forces that are as enduring as God from whom they emanate. They may seem to our finite perception to fall. They often seem to lag. "The mills of the God's grind slowly," but they grind and victory for right and truth and goodness are as certain as that God rules in his universe. Why he does not hasten the final triumph, according to our notion, is beyond our ken. He works in his own good way; he sees the end from the beginning; with him a thousand years are but as one day.

O, yet we trust that somehow good will be the final goal of ill.

Behold, we know not anything; I can but trust that good shall fall at last—far off—at last, to all. And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I? An infant crying for the light, And with no language but a cry.

The most important thing in our individual lives is our attitude toward God's great plan as far as we can apprehend it. Our attitude may be that of indifference; it may be that of opposition, or it may be that of cooperation and assistance.

No doubt the omnipotent One could bring about all good things in an instant of time. But that does not seem to be his way. It appears that he wants his mortal children to work with him or permit him to work through them. And in this way we believe man may attain his highest development and well being.

There is also the possibility that there is nothing evil in his sight. That what we call evil is only good in disguise. That what we call sin and error and injustice are only the misconceptions of our own imperfect and warped imaginings. If so, our misconceptions can only be overcome by our voluntary adherence to the principles that we conceive to be right be-

cause they correspond to our conception of the will and character of God. It is vital, therefore, that our attitude ever be that of assisting the right and resisting the wrong. With that attitude we may hasten the victory that is absolutely certain.

**IT IS GOOD TO LAUGH.**

This is not a funny story although it is about fun; the kind of fun that provokes laughter.

It would be funny if it were not so serious that most of us take life too seriously.

As for yourself, how many good hearty laughs do you indulge in on an average during the twenty-four hours? Perhaps you loosen up enough to "crack" a smile once in awhile but how often do you let a good hearty laugh shake your being and spread its jovialness to all within hearing?

Life is no joke, but it isn't a sin to laugh. There is a time to laugh and a time to be sad. Many a human disaster has been averted by a good laugh. A jovial spirit and wholesome fun will beat the doctor's nostrums.

Fun is natural for the young. Those who would live long and preserve in themselves the spirit of youth should consider the large part that good humor plays in preserving health and prolonging life. The life of the average American grows more and more strenuous. The effort to head off time in all occupations, the increasing complexity of the business and social life, the incessant urge of competition—all have their wearing, nerve-racking effect upon the human constitution.

The most effective offset to all of this is more play, more fun, more recreation. No person should consider himself too old to play. To obtain the greatest benefit, however, one should alternate work with play and not overdo either one.

If you would be in good company, join the Laughter class. You will be lined up with such old boys as these and hundreds of others:

Pret not thyself.—King David.  
A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.—Solomon.

A laugh is worth a hundred groans in any market.—Charles Lamb.

He who has once heartily and wholly laughed cannot be altogether or irretrievably bad.—Thomas Carlyle.

I am persuaded that every time a man smiles—but much more so when he laughs—it adds something to his fragment of life.—Lawrence Sterne.

The riotous tumult of a laugh, I take it, is the mob law of the features.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The value of the German mark is now said to be about one-seventieth of a cent. Before the war it was 23.8 cents. It is probably literally not worth the paper it is printed on.

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